

Downward Mobility - The True Meaning of Christmas

Jesus Christ the Son: superior to the angels or lower than the angels? The first two chapters of Hebrews leads us to answer “Yes.” Hebrews 1:4 describes the Son as “superior to angels” but Hebrews 2:9 says that the Son “was made lower than the angels” and identifies him as, “namely Jesus”. The true meaning of Christmas was that God the Son, “superior to angels”, became man, “was made lower than the angels” to save us.

Hebrews 2:5-18 helps us see that both the Father and the Son were willingly working at Christmas to save. We must never interpret the gospel to mean that the Father was making a reluctant Son come and die to save us, or that the Son came and died to make a reluctant Father forgive us. It was the desire and will of both to act for our salvation.

This text begins focusing primarily on how the Father was working to save us at Christmas. We are told first that God hasn't subjected the world to come to angels and that God did subject the world at creation to humankind. The first humans had everything in creation under their control. The author goes on to say that we do not see this to be the case at present. This is because of the fall. Adam and Eve sinned and this place of honor and glory was forfeited and death entered the world. Yet, Christians see Jesus as the one who is now enthroned in glory and honor. Just as Adam pulled us down from glory with him by his disobedience, Jesus through his obedience lifts us up to glory with him, if we believe in him. Jesus was crowned with glory and honor because he suffered and died. He was able to suffer and die and to taste death for everyone because God the Father acted to make him lower than the angels at Christmas. God the Father also acted to make it evident that Jesus's obedience was perfect, even through the suffering he willed for his Son. God the Father did all this to bring many sons to glory. This refers to believers being brought ultimately to be crowned with the honor and glory humans lost through sin and which they will have in the world to come as they reign with Christ. The suffering of Christ in death was fitting because it aligns with God's nature. God is both the God of justice and of grace. Christ's suffering for our sins satisfied God's justice for sin and showed God's grace to sinners.

These verses continue by emphasizing how the Son was working to save us at Christmas. The Son willingly partook of flesh and blood to suffer and die. He did this to be the destroyer of death and our enemy. The devil is our enemy and death becomes his weapon when people die in their sin. This is true because those who die without trusting in Christ begin to experience eternal destruction and this is the devil's desire for humans. But, death doesn't bring eternal suffering in hell for those who trust in Jesus as their Savior. This is because of Jesus' death. The death of Christ was the death of death for those who follow Christ. Christ also willingly partook of flesh and blood to suffer and die to be the Priest and propitiation for our sins. At Christmas he was born so he could offer the sacrifice to God that would appease God's just wrath toward human sin. He would offer the sacrifice as our High Priest, but also be the sacrifice, offering himself on the cross to turn God's wrath away from us by enduring it for us. Because Jesus propitiated God's wrath in death, Christians do not experience God's wrath at death. Death no longer has this sting or power that served the desire of the devil, for those who follow Christ. This explains why Paul elsewhere asked, “O death where is your sting” and said for himself “to die is gain”. Death for the Christ-follower means to depart and to be with Christ and ultimately to be raised with a glorified body to reign in honor and glory in a new world.

The Father and the Son were willingly working at Christmas to save people from eternal wrath and to eternal glory in the world to come.